DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 334 167 SP 033 141

AUTHOR Prawat, Richard S.
TITLE Conversations with Self and Conversations with Setting: A Framework for Thinking about Teacher Empowerment. Elementary Subjects Center Series No. 36.
INSTITUTION Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, East Lansing, MI.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Apr 91
CONTRACT CA-G0098C0226
NOTE 34p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University, 252 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824-1034 ($3.25).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Context Effect; *Educational Environment; *Educational Theories; Elementary Education; *Epistemology; Politics of Education; Professional Autonomy; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS *Teacher Empowerment

ABSTRACT

A framework for thinking about teacher empowerment is presented. Two important dimensions are used as a basis for highlighting some important similarities and differences emerging in the literature on empowerment. The first dimension relates to the context in which the process occurs. Some educators highlight the importance of the personal context (i.e., conversations with self), while others assume more of an outward perspective in their thinking about empowerment (i.e., conversations with settings). The second important dimension relates to the focus or agenda of the conversations. Here, a distinction is made between agendas that are more epistemological in nature and those that are more political. An illustration is provided of how this framework can be used to understand better the dynamics involved in collaborative work with teachers. Fifty-seven references are listed. (Author/IAH)

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CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF AND CONVERSATIONS WITH SETTING: A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Richard S. Prawat

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education

Michigan State University

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Published by

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects
Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

April 1991

This work is sponsored in part by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, Institute for Research on Teaching, Michigan State University. The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects is funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the Office or Department (Cooperative Agreement No. G0098C0226).

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Abstract

A framework for thinking about teacher empowerment is presented. Two important dimensions are used as a basis for highlighting some important similarities and differences emerging in the literature on empowerment: The first relates to the context in which the process occurs; some educators highlight the importance of the personal context (i.e., conversations with self), while others assume more of an outward perspective in their thinking about empowerment (i.e., conversations with settings). The second important dimension relates to the focus or agenda of the conversations. Here, a distinction is made between agendas that are more epistemological in nature and those that are more political. An illustration is provided of how this framework can be used to understand better the dynamics involved in collaborative work with teachers.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF AND CONVERSATIONS WITH SETTINGS: A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Richard S. Prawat[1]

Use of the term teacher empowerment is no longer simply fashionable in educational discourse, it is almost mandatory. Despite the popularity of this term--or, alternatively, <u>because</u> of it--it is used in multiple and often conflicting ways, especially when applied to teachers. The purpose of this paper is to sort out some of the diverse meanings associated with this expression. In so doing, I will highlight important similarities and differences emerging in the literature as educators write about empowerment. The argument is not that these distinctions represent independent dimensions; the lines of demarcation are too fuzzy for that. Rather than assume categorical distinctions, it may be more apt to think of them in terms of a perceptual metaphor: the widely used "figure-ground" relationship in psychology. Thus, even though the various aspects of empowerment are never entirely out of the picture, different issues (e.g., "voice," knowledge or skill, the workplace) are brought to the fore by different educational theorists. This reflects the fact that these theorists make different assumptions about the context of empowerment and what sorts of issues or agendas ought to be paramount in teachers' minds during the empowerment process. It is impossible to make sense of the empowerment literature without coming to terms with some of these differences.

The particular issues I have chosen to highlight are summarized in Table 1. Two distinctions seem especially important in this regard. The first

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[1]Richard S. Prawat, professor of teacher education, is a senior researcher with the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution made by Tom Bird, in a series of discussions, to the ideas presented here.

Table 1

Key Dimensions in the Different Approaches to Teacher Empowerment

	Agenda	
Context	Epistemological	Political
Conversations with self	What knowledge and value claims should I accept as valid?	What do I personally have to offer to the ongoing conversation in education?
Conversations with settings	What should I focus on in the teaching/learning environment?	What resources and support do I need, as a professional, to be successful in my work?

relates to the context in which empowerment occurs. Some educators stress the importance of the personal context while others assume more of an outward perspective. The key to empowerment, argue the former, lies in the nature of the "conversations" teachers have with themselves.

By altering these conversations, teachers can gain greater control or influence over their own thinking in two senses. The first sense, which might be considered a form of logical self-control (see Rorty, 1982b), supposedly enables teachers to overcome the inclination to accept (or reject) uncritically knowledge claims advanced by so-called experts in the field. The second is thought to relate more to the social or political agenda than to the epistemological. The goal here is to enhance the teachers' ability to deal with social and political oppression--to overcome the common tendency to hold back or to yield to those who are in positions of authority or power. The intent here is to deal with those factors that impede or interfere with the individual's personal development. The personal approach to empowerment is thus associated more with what Greene (1986b) calls "negative" as opposed to "positive" freedoms (i.e., freedom <u>from</u> entanglements or encumbrances).

Some educators assume more of an external or outward stance in their approach to empowerment. According to Greene (1986b), this approach is based on a more active concept of freedom--one that focuses less on freedom as a right and more on freedom as an achievement. The emphasis is thus on the "possibilities" inherent in a particular situation (e.g., the workplace or classroom). The goal is to stimulate teachers' imaginative thinking, the kind of thinking "that summons alternative realitites for those sunken in what seems given" (p. 78). Too often, Greene believes, people accept the inevitability of their own "lived situations": "Submergence in those situations is such that

there appears to be no possibility of things being otherwise then they are," Greene explains. "Or the barriers seem so insurmountable, so much a part of what is given, simply there, that surpassing or resisting appears to be unthinkable" (p. 74). The key to empowerment, then, according to this second perspective, is to change the nature of the conversations teachers have with their settings, to encourage them to be open to new and more effective ways of construing the classroom and workplace environment.

Not only do educators disagree about context when it comes to empowerment, they also disagree about the nature of the agendas being pursued. When discussing the personal context, some stress the role of epistemological content while others highlight the social or political aspects of empowerment (McDonald, 1988). McDonald believes that it is important to distinguish between these two agendas, particularly as they relate to the popular but complex notion of "teachers' voice." "Voice," he writes, "may refer to the right and power to have a say in policy, but it may also refer to the content of what might be said, and implicitly to what those who are to be empowered to speak know" (p. 472). As with context, it is often difficult to distinguish between the epistemological and political aspects of empowerment; nevertheless, educators do tend to highlight one or the other agenda in their writing.

The framework presented in Table 1 will be used as a tool or heuristic for making sense out of the growing body of literature on teacher empowerment. First, however, I should explain the focus on "self" in this table. Empowerment, like education more generally, can be viewed as a process of enculturation. This is not to say, however, that it involves only the internalization of community norms and standards (i.e., beliefs, values, and the like). To assume this position is to assign too passive a role to the individual. Lave

(1988) and others argue that enculturation is a dialectical process: The community shapes the individual, to be sure, but the individual also shapes the community. As Cobb (1989) explains, enculturation is more like negotiation than internalization. Because the process of enculturation, and, by implication, the process of empowerment is viewed as a dialectical process, it is not unreasonable to describe it as a series of conversations one has with self and settings. Such a perspective does not diminish the key role that communities play in providing the vocabulary and legitimating certain forms of discourse (Rorty, 1982a).

Conversations With Self: Epistemological and Political Agendas

As indicated, the expression "conversations with self" describes one stance toward teacher empowerment. Conversations with self are internally focused, aimed at deciding which types of knowledge claims or sociopolitical relationships one ought to regard as most valid or productive. Presumably, these choices are sorted out through the process of internal dialogue or reflection. Those who seek to empower teachers to make wise or informed personal choices in either the epistemological or political domain are trying to influence the nature of this dialogue. There is a clear divergence of opinion in the literature about whether the major focus in this regard ought to be on providing teachers with certain epistemological "tools" (i.e., inquiry or critical reflection skills) or with sociopolitical insights derived from interpretive research (e.g., feminist research).

Before elaborating on this difference, it might be helpful to provide some examples of what is meant by "conversations with self." Several educators have used this concept in writing about empowerment. Diane Holt-Reynolds (1990), for one, has found this notion helpful in her work with preservice

teachers. Her aim in using this concept to analyze interviews with novice teachers is to identify discourse strategies that would allow teacher educators to join in the internal dialogue of preservice teachers:

> We need to find elegant, respectful ways of overhearing their ongoing, internal dialogues. Second, we need to develop patterns of participation in those dialogues. Only as participants can we hope to influence either the structure or content of preservice teachers' internal strategies for reflection. (p. 31)

The Epistemological Agenda

Characterizing the reflective thought process as a type of conversation with self is not new--it is an idea that has been around a while in philosophy and education. Most often it has been used in connection with the pursuit of an epistemological as opposed to a political agenda. Thus, Peirce, writing in 1870, used the concept of internal dialogue to account for rational thought: When one reasons, he said, it is for the purpose of persuading the critical self (cited in Duncan, 1969). Dewey (cited in Zeichner 1981-82) elaborated on this notion, defining critical reflection as a type of process which entails "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads" (p. 5). More recently, Moshman (1990) defined rationality as "the self-reflective" coordination and use of reasons to justify beliefs. The image one draws from these remarks is that of one carrying on an internal dialogue; the self who is open to new beliefs seeks to convince the skeptical or doubting self of the validity of certain claims.

According to one perspective on empowerment, then, the "liberated" teacher is one who is free from the "unwarranted control of unjustified beliefs" (Siegel, 1990, p. 16). These beliefs fall under the rubric of either

knowledge or moral claims. The important point is that teachers should be encouraged to develop certain epistemological "tools" (i.e., inquiry-oriented skills and dispositions) that help them distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable claims in education (Liston & Zeichner, 1990). In the broadest sense, the purpose is to develop "a language of critique and demystification" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 229), an arsenal of analytic skills that allows one to critically examine a broad range of educational claims (Tom, 1985).

There is nothing timeless about the criteria adopted by a scholarly community. As Rorty (1982a) argues, all criteria are no more than "temporary resting places, constructed by a community to facilitate its inquiries" (p. xlii). Perhaps for this reason, Rorty (1982b) assigns a higher priority to dispositions than skills in fostering critical reflection. "There is no such thing as 'the scientific method' outside of moral virtues," he explains (p. 8). Under the "moral virtue" rubric he includes a number of important dispositions: a willingness to accept experimental disconfirmation, to listen to alternative theories, to jettison old ways of thinking in favor of newer, more useful perspectives. Explicit in Rorty's set of moral virtues is the notion that "conversations with self" about the validity of knowledge claims are accompanied--and, perhaps, set in motion by--conversations with others. Discourse or dialogue within the scholarly community is viewed as the most important mechanism for testing knowledge claims. Knowledge is a social product. Rorty (1989) summarizes his position as follows:

> Since truth is a property of sentences [i.e., the assertion meets certain agreed-upon criteria], since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths. (p. 21)

Whether the focus is on fostering analytic skills or dispositions, there appears to be general agreement that epistemological empowerment is essential

if teachers are to become full participants in the scholarly discourse community, helping to shape the knowledge generated by that community instead of being mere consumers of its finished products.

The Political Agenda.

Conversations with self need not only deal with issues that are epistemological in nature. Several theorists stress the fact that this internal dialogue often is more "political" in nature. In this second type of conversation, two goals are pursued in tandem: confirmation of self and dealing with unequal power relations (Schniedewind, 1985).

A key assumption in feminist theory, which underlies the political approach being discussed, is that the difficulty women and other oppressed people (i.e., minorities and low-status white males) experience in our culture is less attributable to their own inadequacy than it is to how the world treats them. This mistreatment surfaces in subtle but pervasive ways: One of the most insidious strikes at the core of the individual's being because it relates to language or discourse. It is through language that we come to define ourselves. Language allows us to translate our private experience into public utterance, and this sort of "authoring" of one's own story is a key aspect in the development of a sense of self. Clark and Holquist (1984) cite Bahktin, a Russian philosopher, who equates the activity of authorship to the "building of a self" (p. 64).

Women and other oppressed people may have trouble giving voice to their experience because the forms of discourse they favor are devalued in the male-dominated culture. The problem has been succinctly stated by Lewis and Simon (1986): "Women's experience and discursive forms are defined by men as illegitimate within the terms of men's experience and men's discursive forms"

(p. 464). Feminists take issue with the privileged position assigned to masculine forms of speech. Too often, they believe, this mode of discourse, with its emphasis on objective, disembodied argument, has been used to bludgeon women and minorities into silence. Not only does rational discourse devalue the sort of close-up, experiential ways of knowing favored by women (Clinchy, Belenkey, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1985), it is propelled by a dialectical process that is inherently confrontative.[2] The element of conflict associated with masculine modes of discourse cuts against the grain for many women (Cochran-Smith, 1990). For them, "connection" is the operative concept: "The only way for women to understand an idea is not to doubt it, to 'knock it down' or 'take it apart' as men tend to do, but to understand the experience of the person to whom the idea belongs and to share her experience" (Hoffman, 1986, p. 516).

The key to empowerment from the political perspective is to nurture alternative modes of discourse. This requires a twofold approach. The first is consciousness raising, heightening awareness of how social processes and institutions perpetuate unequal power arrangements (Cherryholmes, 1988) and the second is a supportive environment. If oppressed people are to break out of the silence imposed on them--both within and without (Lewis & Simon, 1986)--they must come to terms with their own exploitation. They must learn to "depersonalize" the process by putting their own experience in social and historical perspective. Autobiographical writing can contribute to this process. As Polkinghorne (1988) puts it, "Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11).

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[2]Dialectic is derived from the Greek "dialegesthai," which means "to fight with words" (see d'Aquili & Mol, 1990, p. 940).

Authoring assumes an audience--sympathetic and engaged readers who will attempt to understand the author's message (Tappen & Brown, 1989). The second important goal in empowerment, closely connected to the first, is to create the sort of supportive environment where one can find and speak his or her own voice. Too often women and minorities hold back, feeling they have little to offer in the way of personal experience. As Noddings (1986) explains, opportunities to overcome this defeatist sort of conversation with self are most likely to occur in the context of a "caring community," where people simultaneously care for and seek to bring out the best in one another. Because individuals are relational beings, self-enhancement and community building are one and the same.

According to Noddings (1986), the ethic that governs relations within a caring community--and that plays such an important role in enabling individuals to find their own voice--should be applied in the public as well as the private domain, particularly in education. This would require a major "political" reorientation: "We simply have not learned to use the language of relation comfortably outside the private domain," she argues, "and yet it is clearly possible--and, I would argue, imperative--to do so" (p. 499). The concept of a caring community has merit in thinking about the ways teachers might relate to one another and to their students. In this sense, the process of "political empowerment" seeks to influence the nature of teachers' conversations with self and with the settings or contexts we call classroom and school.

Conversations With Settings: Epistemological and Political Agendas

The expression "conversations with settings" is borrowed from Schon (1990). He argues that this sort of reflective "transaction" with the environment can occur in one of two different modes or in a hybrid of the two.

In the discovery mode, the intent of the conversation is to make sense out of a puzzling situation or phenomenon in order to arrive at some workable understanding. This requires a special sort of stance toward the phenomenon in question. Schon (1990) quotes McClintock who said that "one must have the time to look, the patience to 'hear what the material has to say to you,' the openness to 'let it come to you'" (p. 17).

The second conversational mode, that of design, is more demanding. During design, one both shapes the problematic situation and is shaped by it. Thus, the designer brings certain conceptual or affective biases to the situation. Schon (1990) highlights the role of "prestructures" and "appreciations" in this regard. Prestructures are the understandings that allow one to interpret a situation or phenomenon; appreciative judgments reflect one's likings and dislikings for different aspects or elements of the situation. Together, these two factors help structure the individual's "design world," determining what features of the situation get attended to and in what order. Within this design world, certain problems may arise which are relative to that world. These problems set in motion a process of search and experimentation. The designer may also encounter "surprises" of various sorts that trigger a search for new ways of seeing things. Thus, there is considerable "back talk" generated by the situation in this sort of conversation with setting.

Conversations with settings involve more of an outward focus than do conversations with self. This "outward" versus "inward" distinction has been detailed recently by Liston and Zeichner (1990). Having been two of the foremost advocates of the inward, critical reflection approach to empowerment discussed above, Liston and Zeichner now wish to add an outward, contextual

component to this process. Thus, they maintain, those engaged in ruminating over what constitutes valid beliefs in education must also attend to the "context" in which this conversation with self is located:

> A reflective examination of our educational practices inevitably raises questions about our descriptive understanding of both particular and general educational situations. When we reflect on our teaching, it is appropriate for questions about the students, the curriculum, the institutional setting, and the larger social role of schools to surface. Therefore it seems that another central task for the teacher educator is to encourage the examination of and conversations about how our descriptive views of children, schools, and the larger community affect our educational practice. (pp. 240-241)

The Epistemological Agenda

This outward or contextual purview has long been of interest to cognitive psychologists and those who focus on the teaching and learning of specific content (i.e., mathematics, science, or literacy). These researchers seek to empower teachers by providing them with alternative theoretical frameworks for thinking about the teaching/learning context. The purpose of this approach to empowerment is epistemological: to encourage teachers to look at their world through new conceptual lenses--to, in Schon's language, encourage teachers to bring to bear new "prestructures" and "appreciations" as they converse with settings--thus creating new opportunities for development and change in their classroom teaching. An example might be helpful.

In a program at the University of Wisconsin, researchers (Carpenter, Fennema, Peterson, Chiang, & Loef, 1989) have succeeded in getting teachers to reexamine their traditional, hierarchical views of mathematics learning (e.g., the notion that children must master number facts and computational skills before they can solve word problems). Recent research on children's invented strategies in addition and subtraction is the instrument for accomplishing this

goal. The theory that underlies this research--termed "constructivist theory"--has been used in a number of studies aimed at changing teachers' views about teaching and learning (Lampert, 1986; Roth, 1987; Smith & Neale, in press). (While there are alternative versions of this theory, constructivist researchers speak with one voice about the need to change the teachers' stance toward the learner, with the students' own efforts to understand occupying center stage [Prawat, in press-a].)

Those who seek to empower teachers by providing them with alternative ways of construing--and thus conversing with--educational settings are pragmatic with regard to theories and ideas. Science does turn up better ways of construing reality; but, as Rorty (1982b) points out, successive theories are not better because they correspond more closely to reality--they are better because they allow us to address new, more vexing problems. Theories function as epistemological "tools," enlarging our field of vision--and thus opening up new possibilities for intellectual development (see Schon, 1990). According to this view, theories, and the ideas derived from theories, direct our attention to important aspects of the environment that otherwise would go unnoticed. As Gough (1989) states, they help "educate attention," a process that can produce dramatic results: Greene (1986a) adds, "I think of numerous figures in literature, yes, and in history who overcame their own powerlessness through 'shocks of awareness,' through increasingly rich . . .'naming' of the world" (p. 24). The notion that theory heightens perceptual awareness is consistent with its etymological roots: The word "theory" is derived from the Greek "theamai," or "I behold," suggesting that it is intended to function as a visual stimulus (see Coles, 1989; Prawat, in press-b).

According to Schon (1990), the structures that practitioners bring to the design task are starting points in a series of ongoing conversations with settings. They shape how practitioners interpret various tasks (e.g., curriculum development), but they are subject to revision as practitioners confront the unexpected: "Designing opens up possibilities for surprise that may trigger new ways of seeing things" (p. 26). The key, then, according to advocates of this approach to empowerment, is to encourage teachers to regard all theory (i.e., their prestructures and appreciations) as tentative--representing the best, perhaps, of what we currently know about teaching and learning, but subject to further testing and revision. According to this view, which is key to any approach aimed at epistemological empowerment, theory can point the way, but it ought not to dictate practice. As Duffy (1990) explains in his recent paper on empowerment:

> We must get beyond giving teachers the impression that the key to effective instruction is compliance with our favored theories and our favored techniques. We must instead convey the much more complex reality that what is useful usually depends on the situation. Consequently, we must help teachers understand what a theory or procedure is good for, when it might be useful, and how to make those decisions. (p. 23)

The Political Agenda

Thus far, the discussion in this section of the paper has focused on the issue of epistemological empowerment. As in the case of conversations with self, however, there is a political analogue to this more knowledge-oriented approach. The specifics of this second approach to empowerment are a little hard to pin down. Nevertheless, there is widespread agreement about the immediate goal: to provide teachers with greater control and autonomy in the workplace and in the profession. At present, the system is deficient on both counts. Thus, teachers typically have little voice in workplace issues, such

as the choice of curriculum material, the types of tests used to evaluate instruction, the scheduling of classes, and the allocation of instructional resources. Nor do teachers exert much control over their profession as a whole. They lack the structures and processes present in other professions, like law and medicine, that control entry into the profession and weed out those deemed unqualified to practice. A lack of autonomy and control on the part of teachers is problematic because it affects their productivity and commitment to the workplace.

The productivity argument is not unique to teaching. It is based on a series of assumptions that underlie current thinking in business and industry (Rowan, 1990). The logic goes something like this: As tasks become more complex or uncertain, employees are expected to exercise more judgment and choice. However, the pattern of communication that facilitates this sort of behavior (i.e., open information sharing) is actively discouraged in many organizations, which continue to utilize highly centralized, top-down control structures. The mismatch between task structure and organizational structure presents those in charge with a clear choice: Either simplify or "de-skill" the task, an option which may not be feasible in this age of high technology, or restructure the workplace, allowing employees greater autonomy or room to make decisions.

The productivity argument has been applied to education. As in the case of business and industry, work demands in education are thought to be rapidly increasing in complexity. Teachers are now expected to go beyond the basics--to teach for "higher order thinking," "problem solving," and the like. As Cohen (1988) explains, teachers who stress these goals are being asked to "work harder, concentrate more, and embrace larger pedagogical responsibilities

than if they only assigned text chapters and seatwork" (p. 255). If teachers are to meet these demands, according to the empowerment argument, they must be given greater autonomy and decision-making power in schools and in the teaching profession.

The discourse on empowerment broadens when commitment to the workplace is the rationale. Those who focus on commitment to the workplace, as opposed to teacher productivity, believe that the problems in education extend well beyond teachers' needing to deal with a more complex set of work demands. Teacher disaffection, absenteeism, stress, and high turnover, particularly among the more academically talented members of the profession, are seen as symptomatic of a serious, underlying malaise on the part of teachers. Because commitment to the workplace is viewed as a more encompassing type of outcome variable, it has become the criterion of choice in efforts to evaluate educational reform strategies (Porter, Archibald, & Tyree, in press). It is, according to Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990), quite simply the "hallmark of organizational success" in education (p. 241).

There is considerable support for the hypothesized link between commitment to the workplace and perceptions of autonomy and control (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990). From a feminist perspective, however, the notion of commitment to the workplace may miss the point. This argument requires some elaboration. Commitment to others, as I argued in the first section of the paper, is an important aspect of the teacher's own personal empowerment. Participation in a caring community is considered essential if teachers--the majority of whom are women or low-status white males--are to develop voice and a sense of self. An abstract commitment to workplace appears to add little to this, more concrete commitment to others (i.e., colleagues and students).

Therefore, the workplace aspect of the commitment variable is misleading or redundant (i.e., subsumed under the commitment to others category).

The emphasis on commitment to the workplace as the goal of teacher empowerment has not proven terribly helpful to those engaged in restructuring work. For one thing, the workplace rhetoric is far removed from issues of student learning. "Most of the talk about school site management, teacher career ladders, or schools of choice," Newmann points out, "never considers how these mechanisms will teach students to write about literature, to reason about scientific phenomena, or to learn important geographical facts" (in press, p. 2). Given this problem, I would like to propose an alternative scheme, based upon feminist research. This scheme builds upon Schon's notion of conversations with settings. It assumes that the subject of these conversations, in the political sphere, relates to the issue of resource allocation. The empowered teacher, from this perspective, is one who is able to secure necessary resources and to mobilize them in the students' behalf. The key question is not "What do I need to feel satisfied in my work?" as the teacher commitment literature suggests (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990); the key question is rather, "What resources and support do I need, as a professional, to be successful in my work?" This second question relates more to commitment to self and to students than to the workplace.

Gilligan's (1982) chapter on commitment and caring from a feminist perspective sheds light on the issue raised above. She argues that a key dilemma for women, because of their focus on the needs of others, is how much of a commitment they owe to themselves. This surfaces in the conflict many women experience as they attempt, simultaneously, to honor commitments to family and to career. At a deeper level, this conflict reflects a tendency for

women to identify "goodness" with self-sacrifice. Gilligan believes that this imbalance between personal needs and the needs of others can change, as women learn to extend their moral obligation to self as well as to those for whom they feel responsible:

> Although from one point of view, paying attention to one's own needs is selfish, from a different perspective it is not only honest but fair. This is the essence of the transitional shift toward a new concept of goodness, which turns inward in acknowledging the self and in accepting responsibility for choice. (p. 85)

Striking a balance between one's obligation to self and to others is an important issue in the workplace, particularly for teachers. It manifests itself in the conflict many teachers report between the need to "make do" on the one hand, and the sense that they should demand more of the system on the other (Schram, Prawat, Ricks, & Sands, 1991). "Making do," in this context, often means fulfilling one's obligations to others--principals, colleagues, parents, and students--with a minimum of bother and fuss. As one teacher put it, "I can't ask for the material I need if it means that others might go without. When resources are limited, it's better to bite your tongue" (Prawat, 1991, p. 14).

Supposedly, being able to compete for resources is one of the advantages of being a professional. This is part of the bargain professions strike with society--saying, in effect, "Give us the resources, and we will tackle your toughest problems" (Schon, 1987). For the most part, this bargain has been honored. Teaching may be the lone exception as the Carnegie Forum (1986) points out,

> Americans care more about providing adequate support staff and services to those who design the appliances we use, make television programs for our evening entertainment and engineer our roads, than those who educate our children. (p. 41)

A number of educational reformers have singled out the lack of adequate resources as a major source of frustration and discouragement on the part of teachers (McLaughlin & Yee, 1988). (Note: "Resources" are not all physical in nature; having adequate time for planning and reflection and sharing concerns with colleagues could be included under this rubric. In the present paper, this set of factors is what is meant by "support.")

There is little that teachers, as individuals, can do to challenge the power arrangements that deny them access to needed resources. When they speak as members of a profession, however, their demands have more credibility and are more apt to be heeded by policy makers. This, at least, is one of the arguments made by those seeking to empower teachers politically. This argument complicates the situation because it suggests that an important condition must be added to Gilligan's concept: Namely, that a commitment to self is empowering for teachers only when it takes the form of a commitment to self <u>as professional</u>.

Adding this condition, however, simplifies the situation in another way. It helps the teacher resolve the conflict in commitment talked about by Gilligan (i.e., commitments to self and others). In a sense, these two moral obligations come together when the teacher embraces the more encompassing commitment to self as professional. As a number of people have pointed out, being a professional means that one is part of a community and is committed to carrying out the role obligations of that community. In the helping professions, in particular, the ultimate test of any commitment, whether to self or colleagues, is the extent to which it advances the interests of the clients one serves (Buchmann, 1990). This is an important point to keep in mind. Taking issue with the emphasis on personal freedom and self-realization

in the literature on political empowerment, Buchmann (1990) argues that "confounding professional development with a transformation that makes teachers more like people who would not want to be classroom teachers is cockeyed, and not productive of good policy" (p. 505).

The purpose of the political approach to empowerment, then, as I have interpreted it here, is to help teachers develop a commitment to self as a professional. This set of "appreciations," to use Schon's term, leads to a specific set of conversations with settings--those in which teachers become more politically active in order to secure the resources and support necessary to meet the needs of the students they serve.

Summing Up

In the introduction to this paper, I argued that the distinctions between the different approaches to teacher empowerment are not hard and fast. Some writers emphasize this fact. Gearhart (1983), for example, believes that it is desirable for teachers to switch back and forth between what I have termed epistemological and political conversations with self; these two types of discourse may complement each other:

> What the dialectical process lacks, feminism seems to have in abundance: feelings, connections with personal experience, the grounding of ideas in reality, and a regard for unconscious motives and processes. If we can use these gifts and strengthen our analytical side, we can begin communicating more effectively. (p. 16)

Others are less optimistic about the feasibility of this sort of "code-switching." Ellsworth (1989), for one, thinks that it is counterproductive for women and people of color to "subject themselves" to the logic of rationalism. This mode of discourse has been used to exclude and silence women and minorities. "Rational argument," she writes, "has operated in ways that set up as its opposite an irrational Other, which has been understood historically as

the province of women and other exotic Others" (p. 301). Fortunately, Ellsworth writes, the academy is becoming more receptive to nonrational, "narrative" ways of knowing thanks to the influence of poststructuralist theory, which recognizes the legitimacy of alternative modes of discourse.

In a similar fashion, one notes other writers who regard the different approaches to empowerment as more or less compatible. Some, like Elliott (1988) find it impossible to separate particular agendas. Thus, he argues that the personal and political aspects of empowerment are one and the same:

> Self-awareness and awareness of the institutional context of one's work as a teacher are not developed by separate cognitive processes: reflexive, and objective analysis. Reflexive practice necessarily implies both self-critique and institutional critique. One cannot have one without the other. (p. 50)

Laird (1988) seconds this notion, commenting that feminists regard as mutually enlightening efforts aimed at self-definition and "insubordination." Gitlin (1990) supports a middle-ground position. He believes that the development of voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for taking political action. Teachers need to fight for the right to tell their own educational stories within the school context--but they must also work to change structures within the school so that right makes a long-term difference: "The development of voice requires that school structures be altered to encourage political action and protest" (p. 460).

Liston and Zeichner (1990), although less inclined than Elliott to merge dimensions, also see an intimate connection between different empowerment agendas: In this case, the analytic and conceptual (or theoretical). They point out that teachers who operate from different theoretical perspectives are apt to respond in different ways to the same knowledge claim. They use as an

example the reasonable assertion that black children will be handicapped if they fail to master standard English. Presumably, the reflective teacher brings an inquiry frame of mind to this issue--wanting to examine the research basis for such a claim. This process, however, does not occur in a theoretical vacuum. According to Liston and Zeichner, teachers may employ distinctly different conceptual "lenses" when thinking about issues of cultural diversity. For example, some may regard nonstandard English as a sign of intellectual deficiency, while others may bring a bicultural perspective to bear, viewing nonstandard dialects as distinct but intellectually equivalent modes of expression.

Other theorists have suggested similar interactions between different approaches to empowerment. McDonald (1986), for one, is quite explicit in this regard in his description of the history of a teacher empowerment project in which he and several other high school teachers were involved. As McDonald explains, the project began as an informal follow-up to a three-day conference on school improvement sponsored by a local school organization: "We decided to keep our conference going indefinitely, to keep talking with each other in order to support each other" (p. 358). Interestingly, however, different empowerment agendas began to emerge as the group evolved over the course of the year. These agendas resemble those described in different cells of Table 1. Thus, McDonald notes three important phases in the groups' development. The first two phases map nicely onto the political empowerment agendas depicted in the table.

At first, McDonald (1986) notes, teachers in the group appeared to be groping to find a voice, "a language in which to talk with each other" (p. 358). This agenda, which occupied a fair amount of time early in the

group's history, gradually evolved into an agenda aimed more at finding one's professional voice:

> In its second phase of development, the Secondary Study Group cultivated the teacher's voice not simply to break the long silence and thus gain support through collegiality, but also to gain some say in policy. The group adopted a political aim to set beside its psychological one--to transform the teacher's role from that of passive recipient of policy made to active participant in policy making. (p.359)

In this second, political phase, teachers began to see their earlier silence as reflecting more than isolation from colleagues and low status vis-a-vis other academics. They began to see it as a protective response to their own lack of autonomy and subordination.

The third phase in the group's development involved a shift in focus from the political to the epistemological arena. As McDonald explains, this shift involved the implementation of yet another strategy to deal with an important aspect of teacher empowerment: the need to frame one's work to bring order and perspective to what is otherwise a complex and uncertain enterprise. The approach McDonald and his colleagues used in the third phase is identical to that employed by Smyth (1989). Each of the teachers told stories--"reflective anecdotes"--from their teaching practice.

McDonald emphasizes that the group, from the very beginning, found these examples of teaching theoretically interesting. In fact, he adds, the urge to theorize grew stronger as the experiment continued. Near the end of his paper, McDonald (1986) neatly characterizes the activity engaged in by the study group during the third phase of its existence. The intent, he writes, was "to collectivize and analyze experience in the light of theory" (p. 376). The test of any theory, in this context, is its explanatory and transformative value: that is, the extent to which it helps teachers make sense out of particular

situations and leads to changes in the ways they understand or experience practice (Smyth, 1989).

The above discussion illustrates how the framework presented in Table 1 can be used to characterize the changing agendas that emerge in the course of collaborative work with teachers. In a similar way, this framework has proven useful in examining changes in the way teachers and teacher educators interact in a long-term project focusing on mathematics teaching and learning at the elementary school level (Schram et al., 1991). Although results of the discourse analysis derived from the use of this framework is preliminary, it has yielded insights which are empowering for the would-be "empowerers." It reinforces the notion that empowerment agendas evolve slowly, over time, as participants work to construct a shared understanding of group purposes or goals.

We, the teacher educators, have had to revise our belief that the most important purpose of the project is epistemological in nature--in particular, our belief that the project is primarily a mechanism for getting teachers to examine constructivist views of teaching and learning in the context of elementary school mathematics. While this continues to be an important goal, it is not the sole agenda of the group. In many of the weekly meetings, it has taken a backseat to other, more important concerns, especially those related to the allocation of resources and support. This is as it should be. Recognizing and legitimating the fact that people bring different agendas to the collaborative process is important if one is to move forward with that process. The process itself is messy--and time-consuming. It takes time for people to recognize the value that an empowering relationship holds; it also takes a special sort of environment. As Hogan (1988) so aptly puts it, "Empowering

relationships involve feelings of 'connectedness' that are developed in situations of equality, caring, and mutual purpose and intention" (p. 12).

In the final analysis, it is likely that the different empowerment strategies talked about above all contribute to the teacher's ability to engage in complex, ongoing conversations about education. Each of the questions listed in Table 1 could surface in multiple and interacting ways when teachers participate in discourse or dialogue; that is, the issue of what one can contribute to the conversation, how one might sort out conflicting claims or assertions, what one ought to focus on during the discussion, and how one might more effectively act based on the knowledge and insight thus gained--all may be part of a piece. This is not to say that it is wrong for educators to stress one aspect of empowerment over others. We need to be reminded that each is important in its own right, and that is what advocates of different points of view do. However, we also need to better understand how the different aspects of empowerment work together to facilitate improvements in the lives of teachers and of the students they serve. To accomplish this goal, we need additional, thoughtful case studies of collaborative work with teachers.

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